

## **A NINETEENTH CENTURY MINERAL WATER BOTTLER**

Excavations on the block bounded by Tatnall and Orange Streets, south of Second Street, uncovered a privy and trash dumps from a mineral water bottling works that occupied the block from 1848 to 1852. Historic research indicated that the owner of the bottling works was Joseph Dowdall. This information came from an 1848 advertisement in an early Wilmington historic newspaper, "The Blue Hen's Chicken". The advertisement reads:

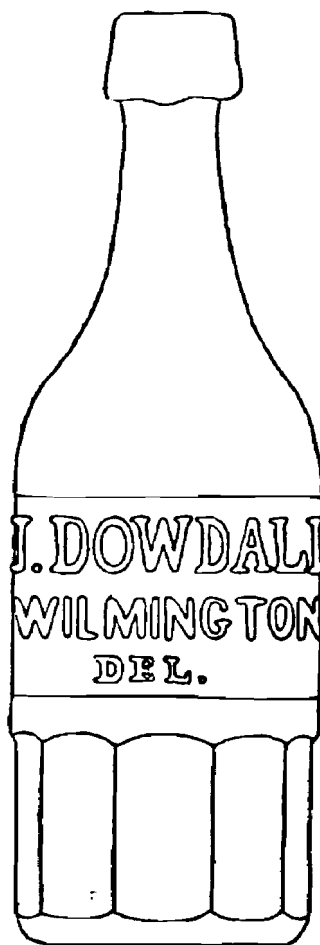
. . . the subscriber respectively informs the citizens of Wilmington, that he (Dowdall) has fitted up an establishment for the manufacture of LEMON and SASPARILLA MINERAL WATER at 23 W. Front Street, between Orange and Tatnall . . .

The historic record did not indicate if Dowdall also lived at this address. A second advertisement was found on another Dowdall bottling works in Chester County, Pennsylvania, which was possibly his original business (Plate 11). The advertisement says that Dowdall had been running this particular business for 27 years. The date of the advertisement was May 29, 1849, which was at the same time that he had the bottling establishment in Wilmington. Dowdall seems to have been doing well, as he could afford to open a second establishment in Wilmington. It is not clear if he lived at his Wilmington operation. This is possible, as artifacts from the bottling works in Wilmington contained materials that came from a residence on the property. It is also possible that these materials came from the household of someone he put in charge to run the Wilmington business.

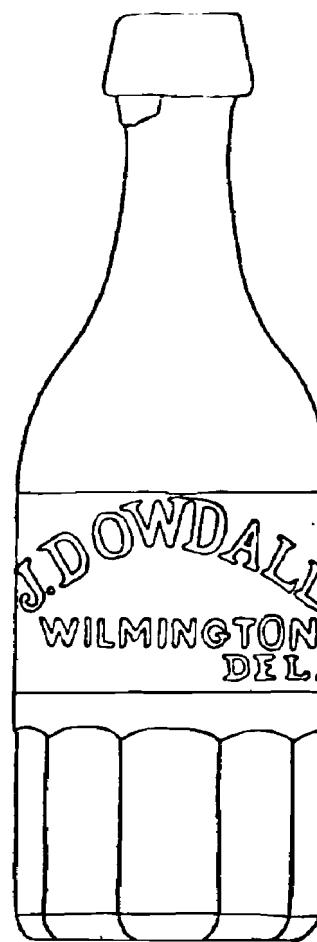
Before the excavations of this particular property, the archaeologists were not completely certain that the property was in fact the Dowdall bottling works. However, after the excavations were done, there was no question that it was. The archaeologists uncovered trash dumps in the rear of the property that contained large amounts of green and blue colored mineral water bottles with Dowdall's name on them (Plate 12). Also found were many marble chips, which were known to be used by mineral water bottlers for carbonizing the waters they sold. It was

### Mineral Waters.

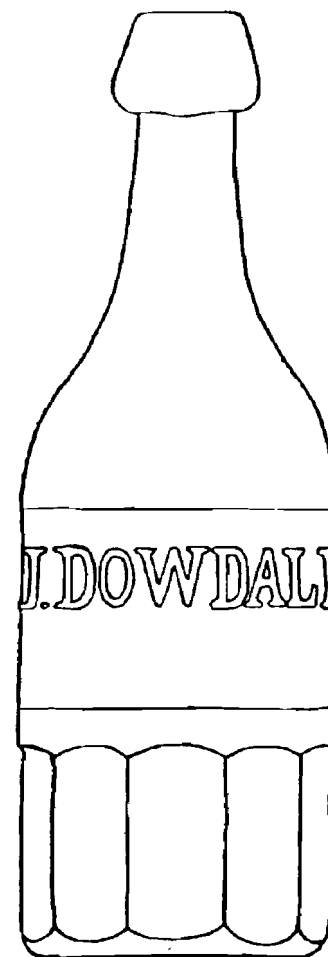
THE subscriber respectfully informs the citizens of Chester and Lancaster counties, that he still continues to manufacture Lemon, Nectar, and Sarsaparilla Mineral or Soda Waters. Also PORTER and ALE, &c., at his old established factory in New Garden township, Chester county, where he is prepared to supply all orders at the shortest notice, and in any quantity that may be desired. Being upwards of twenty-seven years in business, in the county, and so well patronized by his friends, he returns his sincere thanks for their liberal kindness, and asks a continuance of their generous patronage. All orders directed to him at Avondale Post Office, will receive prompt attention. A. R. JOSEPH DOWDALL.  
 May 29—3m. M. S. 222-1842



A



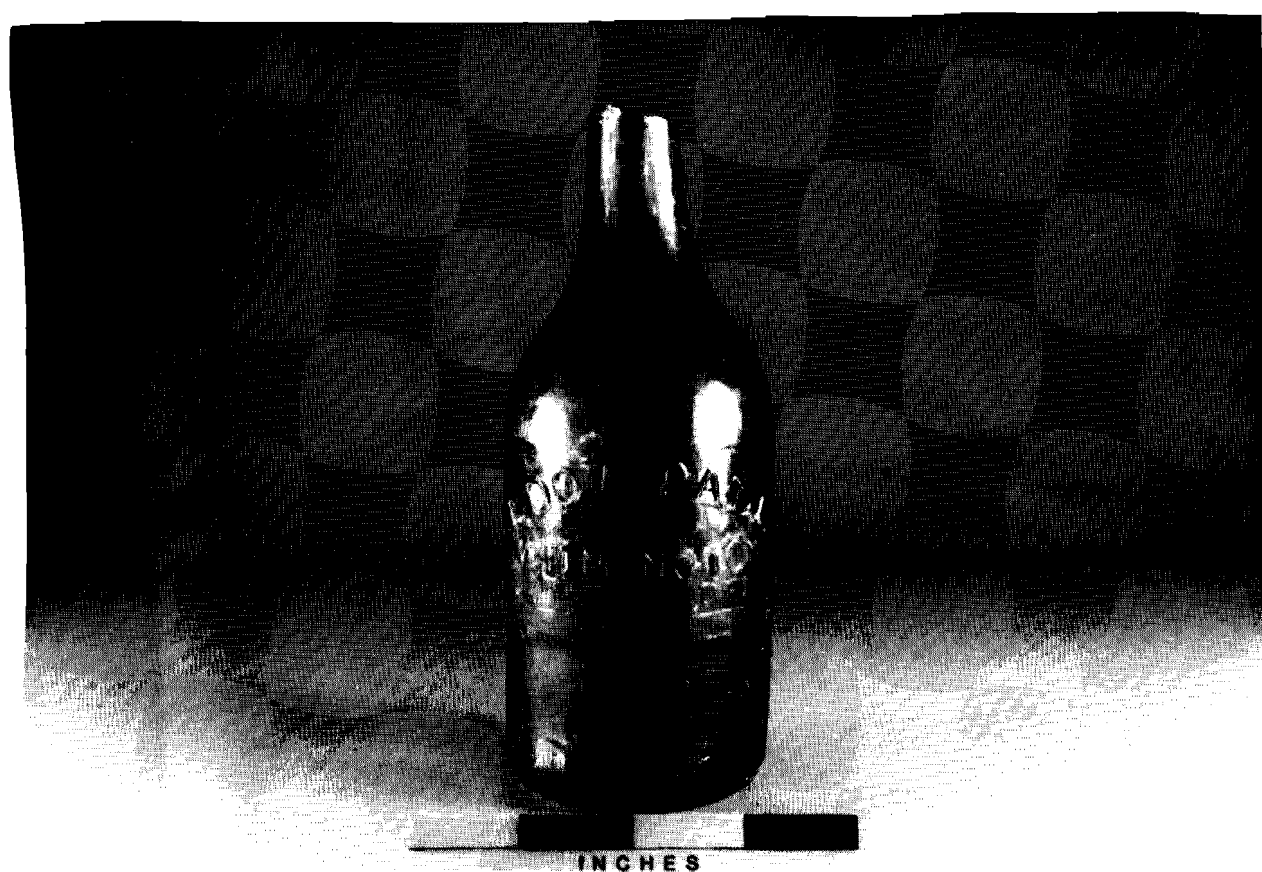
B



C



**PLATE 12**  
**WILMINGTON BLVD.**  
**JOSEPH DOWDALL WATER BOTTLE**

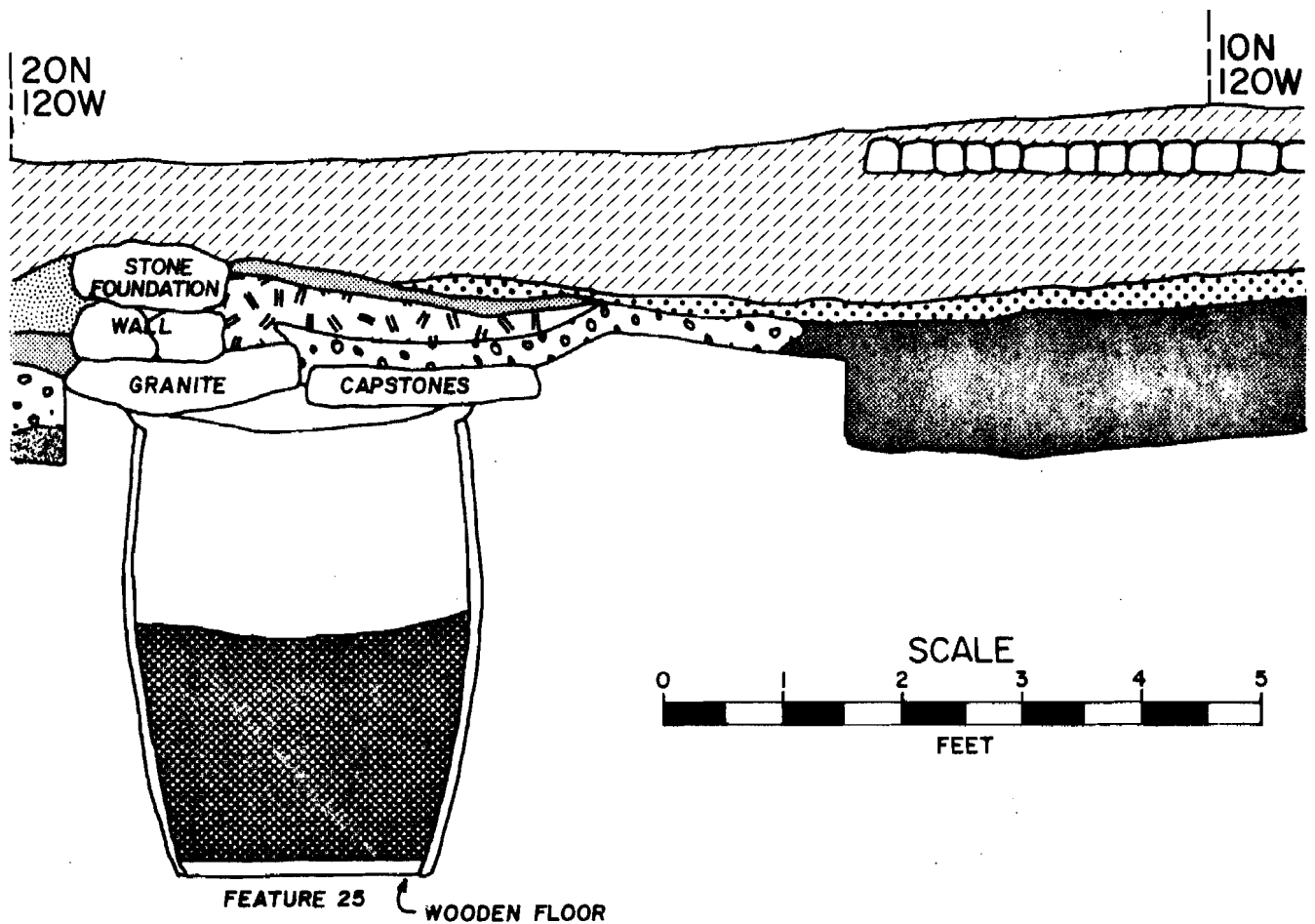


interesting that next to Dowdall's business, in the middle of the block, was a marble yard. Maybe Dowdall deliberately located here so he would be near a ready and probably inexpensive source of marble pieces for his mineral water business.

Artifacts linked to Dowdall's business were found in a privy, in a trash dump around the privy, and in a trench that was filled with oyster shells and trash. Figure 4 shows a profile, or cut-away-view, of the privy on Dowdall's property, with the associated trash dump (indicated in the drawing as "gray brown loam and clay with bottle concentration"). Each layer seen in the profile was carefully removed and recorded by the archaeologists excavating Dowdall's business.


It was first believed that the materials in these features came from a residence on the property, possible Dowdall's or an individual who ran the business for Dowdall while he remained in Chester County, Pennsylvania. It was clear that materials from the bottling works itself were also present in these areas. However, study of the artifacts from these features showed that there were too many dishes in the trash dumps for them to be from a single household. Four hundred and thirteen ceramic vessels were recovered from the property, and almost all dated to the time the bottling works was in business. Thus, during the five years that Dowdall had his business here, about 82 ceramic vessels per year would have been thrown away by the household living on the property. This very high number suggests that the dishes were not used by a single household, but possibly by workers at the bottling works, who may have been fed by Dowdall's kitchen.

The majority of these ceramics were locally made redware vessels that would have been used for preparing and storing food. Thus, cooking was done for a large number of people. Along with these redwares, the archaeologist found a large set of good china, consisting of plates with the blue willow pattern (Plate 13). These dishes were probably used by Dowdall or by the manager of his business. The




 MECHANICALLY STRIPPED DEMOLITION FILL

 LIGHT GRAY SANDY CLAY

 DARK BROWN LOAMY CLAY WITH SLAG

 MOTTLED GRAY/YELLOW CLAY

 BELGIAN BLOCK PAVEMENT COVERED BY ASPHALT PAVING

 GRAY BROWN LOAM & CLAY WITH BOTTLE CONCENTRATION—FEATURE 17

 GRAY BROWN LOAM WITH ASH

 CINDERS & BLACK SANDY CLAY

 GRAY CLAY OR GRAY BROWN CLAY—ORIGINAL GRADE


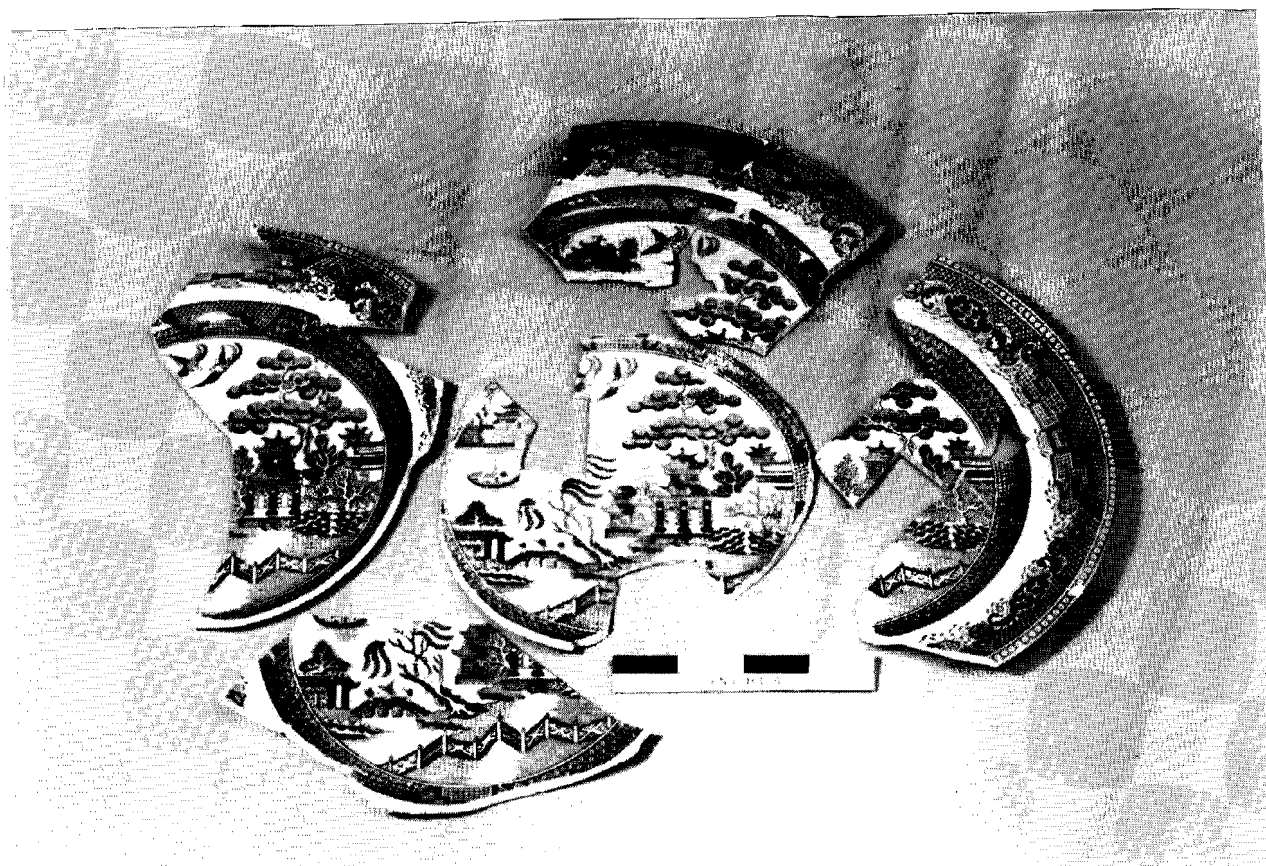
 DARK BROWN/BLACK ORGANIC—PRIVY FILL

FIGURE 4  
PROFILE OF TRASH DEPOSITS  
AND BARREL PRIVY ON LOT  
OWNED BY JOSEPH DOWDALL

**PLATE 13**  
**WILMINGTON BLVD.**  
**DISHES OF BLUE WILLOW TRANSFER PRINT FROM**  
**DOWDALL'S BOTTLING WORKS**



presence of a residence on this property is also suggested by the presence of blue transfer printed tea dishes (Plate 14). Like the families who dumped trash in the cistern of the Market Street property discussed earlier, the individuals living at the bottling works also had tea parties, and probably did some entertaining.

Not only did archaeologists learn that artifacts from both a residence and the bottling business were thrown away in the rear yard of this property, but they also discovered that trash from the works and the residence were dumped in different places. The privy on this lot had very few broken mineral water bottles, but had a high number of dishes for food serving, and of the trash areas in the yard, it had the highest number of dishes for food serving and the highest number of medicinal bottles. This suggests that these artifacts in the privy came from the residence, rather than from the bottling works. Surrounding, and on top of the privy, was a large trash pile containing the highest number of broken mineral water bottling works. The trash filled trench east of the privy produced a very high number of ceramics for food preparation. It is possible that artifacts in the trench came from the household living on the property, but the high number of food preparation dishes indicates that the trench contained materials discarded from food preparation for the workers of the bottling works as well.

One interesting item about the artifacts from this trash filled trench was the high number of oyster shells in the trench, much more than were found in most other trash areas in the entire seven block area. Could the workers have been fed large amounts of oysters, or were these oyster shells used somehow in the manufacturing of mineral water, like the marble chips?

The household that lived on this property was not as wealthy as the residents of the cistern property on Market Street. The ceramics from the bottling works property were of a less expensive variety, mostly blue transfer printed ceramics from the property were not as expensive, this suggests that Dowdall may not have

**PLATE 14**  
**WILMINGTON BLVD.**  
**TEA WARE FROM JOSEPH DOWDALL'S**  
**BOTTLING WORKS**





lived here. If he was a successful businessman, as is suggested by the running of two bottling works at the same time and in different places, one would expect that he would be able to afford more costly items. So, these dishes may be from the household of someone running the Wilmington business for Dowdall. This is a puzzle still to be solved.